The Heidelberg Catechism

Previous Version

Lord's Day 1

Q&A 1
**Q. What is your only comfort
in life and in death?**
A. That I am not my own,[1]
but belong—
body and soul,
in life and in death—[2]
to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.[3]

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,[4]
and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.[5]
He also watches over me in such a way[6]
that not a hair can fall from my head
without the will of my Father in heaven:[7]
in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.[8]

Because I belong to him,
Christ, by his Holy Spirit,
assures me of eternal life[9]
and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready
from now on to live for him.[10]

[1] 1 Cor. 6:19-20
[2] Rom. 14:7-9
[3] 1 Cor. 3:23; Titus 2:14
[4] 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:2
[5] John 8:34-36; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:1-11
[6] John 6:39-40; 10:27-30; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:5
[7] Matt. 10:29-31; Luke 21:16-18
[8] Rom. 8:28
[9] Rom. 8:15-16; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14
[10] Rom. 8:1-17

Q&A 2
**Q. What must you know
to live and die in the joy of this comfort?**
A. Three things:
first, how great my sin and misery are;[1]
second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery;[2]
third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.[3]

[1] Rom. 3:9-10; 1 John 1:10
[2] John 17:3; Acts 4:12; 10:43
[3] Matt. 5:16; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 5:8-10; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 2:9-10

Part I: Human Misery
Lord's Day 2

Q&A 3
Q. How do you come to know your misery?
A. The law of God tells me.[1]

[1] Rom. 3:20; 7:7-25

Q&A 4
Q. What does God's law require of us?
A. Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew 22—

Love the Lord your God
with all your heart
and with all your soul
and with all your mind
and with all your strength.[1*]
This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it:
Love your neighbor as yourself.[2]

All the Law and the Prophets hang
on these two commandments.

[1] Deut. 6:5
[2] Lev. 19:18
*Earlier and better manuscripts of Matthew 22 omit the words "and with all your strength." They are found in Mark 12:30.

Q&A 5
Q. Can you live up to all this perfectly?
A. No.[1]
I have a natural tendency
to hate God and my neighbor.[2]

[1] Rom. 3:9-20, 23; 1 John 1:8, 10
[2] Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 7:23-24; 8:7; Eph. 2:1-3; Titus 3:3

Lord's Day 3

Q&A 6
**Q. Did God create people
so wicked and perverse?**
A. No.
God created them good[1] and in his own image,[2]
that is, in true righteousness and holiness,[3]
so that they might
truly know God their creator,[4]

love him with all their heart,
and live with him in eternal happiness
for his praise and glory.[5]

[1] Gen. 1:31
[2] Gen. 1:26-27
[3] Eph. 4:24
[4] Col. 3:10
[5] Ps. 8

Q&A 7

Q. Then where does this corrupt human nature come from?

A. From the fall and disobedience of our first parents,
Adam and Eve, in Paradise.[1]
This fall has so poisoned our nature[2]
that we are born sinners—
corrupt from conception on.[3]

[1] Gen. 3
[2] Rom. 5:12, 18-19
[3] Ps. 51:5

Q&A 8

Q. But are we so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and inclined toward all evil?

A. Yes,[1] unless we are born again,
by the Spirit of God.[2]

[1] Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Job 14:4; Isa. 53:6
[2] John 3:3-5

Lord's Day 4

Q&A 9

Q. But doesn't God do us an injustice by requiring in his law what we are unable to do?

A. No, God created humans with the ability to keep the law.[1]
They, however, tempted by the devil,[2]
in reckless disobedience,[3]
robbed themselves and all their descendants of these gifts.[4]

[1] Gen. 1:31; Eph. 4:24
[2] Gen. 3:13; John 8:44
[3] Gen. 3:6
[4] Rom. 5:12, 18, 19

Q&A 10

Q. Will God permit such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?

A. Certainly not.
He is terribly angry
about the sin we are born with
as well as the sins we personally commit.

As a just judge
he punishes them now and in eternity.[1]

He has declared:
"Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do
everything written in the Book of the Law."[2]

[1] Ex. 34:7; Ps. 5:4-6; Nah. 1:2; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 5:6; Heb. 9:27
[2] Gal. 3:10; Deut. 27:26

Q&A 11

Q. But isn't God also merciful?

A. God is certainly merciful,[1]
but he is also just.[2]
His justice demands
that sin, committed against his supreme majesty,
be punished with the supreme penalty—
eternal punishment of body and soul.[3]

[1] Ex. 34:6-7; Ps. 103:8-9
[2] Ex. 34:7; Deut. 7:9-11; Ps. 5:4-6; Heb. 10:30-31
[3] Matt. 25:35-46

Part II: Deliverance

Lord's Day 5

Q&A 12

Q. According to God's righteous judgment we deserve punishment both in this world and forever after: how then can we escape this punishment and return to God's favor?

A. God requires that his justice be satisfied.[1]
Therefore the claims of his justice
must be paid in full,
either by ourselves or another.[2]

[1] Ex. 23:7; Rom. 2:1-11
[2] Isa. 53:11; Rom. 8:3-4

Q&A 13

Q. Can we pay this debt ourselves?

A. Certainly not.
Actually, we increase our guilt every day.[1]

[1] Matt. 6:12; Rom. 2:4-5

Q&A 14

**Q. Can another creature—any at all—
pay this debt for us?**

A. No.
To begin with,
God will not punish another creature
for what a human is guilty of.[1]
Besides,
no mere creature can bear the weight
of God's eternal anger against sin
and release others from it.[2]

[1] Ezek. 18:4, 20; Heb. 2:14-18
[2] Ps. 49:7-9; 130:3

Q&A 15

**Q. What kind of mediator and deliverer
should we look for then?**

A. One who is truly human[1] and truly righteous,[2]
yet more powerful than all creatures,
that is, one who is also true God.[3]

[1] Rom. 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:21; Heb. 2:17
[2] Isa. 53:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26
[3] Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Jer. 23:6; John 1:1

Lord's Day 6

Q&A 16

**Q. Why must he be truly human
and truly righteous?**

A. God's justice demands
that human nature, which has sinned,
must pay for its sin;[1]
but a sinner could never pay for others.[2]

[1] Rom. 5:12, 15; 1 Cor. 15:21; Heb. 2:14-16
[2] Heb. 7:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:18

Q&A 17

Q. Why must he also be true God?

A. So that,
by the power of his divinity,
he might bear the weight of God's anger in his humanity
and earn for us
and restore to us
righteousness and life.[1]

[1] Isa. 53; John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21

Q&A 18

**Q. And who is this mediator—
true God and at the same time
truly human and truly righteous?**

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ,[1]
who was given us
to set us completely free
and to make us right with God.[2]

[1] Matt. 1:21-23; Luke 2:11; 1 Tim. 2:5
[2] 1 Cor. 1:30

Q&A 19

Q. How do you come to know this?

A. The holy gospel tells me.
God himself began to reveal the gospel already in Paradise;[1]
later, he proclaimed it
by the holy patriarchs[2] and prophets,[3]
and portrayed it
by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law;[4]
finally, he fulfilled it
through his own dear Son.[5]

[1] Gen. 3:15
[2] Gen. 22:18; 49:10
[3] Isa. 53; Jer. 23:5-6; Mic. 7:18-20; Acts 10:43; Heb. 1:1-2
[4] Lev. 1-7; John 5:46; Heb. 10:1-10
[5] Rom. 10:4; Gal. 4:4-5; Col. 2:17

Lord's Day 7

Q&A 20

Q. Are all saved through Christ
just as all were lost through Adam?

A. No.
Only those are saved
who by true faith
are grafted into Christ
and accept all his blessings.[1]

[1] Matt. 7:14; John 3:16, 18, 36; Rom. 11:16-21

Q&A 21

Q. What is true faith?

A. True faith is
not only a knowledge and conviction
that everything God reveals in his Word is true;[1]
it is also a deep-rooted assurance,[2]
created in me by the Holy Spirit[3] through the gospel,[4]
that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ,[5]
not only others, but I too,[6]
have had my sins forgiven,
have been made forever right with God,
and have been granted salvation.[7]

[1] John 17:3, 17; Heb. 11:1-3; James 2:19
[2] Rom. 4:18-21; 5:1; 10:10; Heb. 4:14-16
[3] Matt. 16:15-17; John 3:5; Acts 16:14
[4] Rom. 1:16; 10:17; 1 Cor. 1:21
[5] Rom. 3:21-26; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-10
[6] Gal. 2:20
[7] Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:10

Q&A 22

Q What then must a Christian believe?

A. Everything God promises us in the gospel.[1]
That gospel is summarized for us
in the articles of our Christian faith—
a creed beyond doubt,
and confessed throughout the world.

[1] Matt. 28:18-20; John 20:30-31

Q&A 23

Q. What are these articles?

A. I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Lord's Day 8

Q&A 24

Q. How are these articles divided?

A. Into three parts:
God the Father and our creation;
God the Son and our deliverance;
God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification.

Q&A 25

Q. Since there is but one God,[1]
why do you speak of three:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

A. Because that is how
God has revealed himself in his Word:[2]
these three distinct persons
are one, true, eternal God.

[1] Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6
[2] Matt. 3:16-17; 28:18-19; Luke 4:18 (Isa. 61:1); John 14:26; 15:26;
2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 4:6; Tit. 3:5-6

Part II: Deliverance: God the Father
Lord's Day 9

Q&A 26
**Q. What do you believe when you say,
"I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth"?**
A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who out of nothing created heaven and earth
and everything in them,[1]
who still upholds and rules them
by his eternal counsel and providence,[2]
is my God and Father
because of Christ his Son.[3]

I trust him so much that I do not doubt
he will provide
whatever I need
for body and soul,[4]
and he will turn to my good
whatever adversity he sends me
in this sad world.[5]

He is able to do this because he is almighty God;[6]
he desires to do this because he is a faithful Father.[7]

[1] Gen. 1 & 2; Ex. 20:11; Ps. 33:6; Isa. 44:24; Acts 4:24; 14:15
[2] Ps. 104; Matt. 6:30; 10:29; Eph. 1:11
[3] John 1:12-13; Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:4-7; Eph. 1:5
[4] Ps. 55:22; Matt. 6:25-26; Luke 12:22-31
[5] Rom. 8:28
[6] Gen. 18:14; Rom. 8:31-39
[7] Matt. 7:9-11

Lord's Day 10

Q&A 27
**Q. What do you understand
by the providence of God?**
A. Providence is
the almighty and ever present power of God[1]
by which he upholds, as with his hand,
heaven
and earth
and all creatures,[2]
and so rules them that
leaf and blade,
rain and drought,
fruitful and lean years,
food and drink,
health and sickness,
prosperity and poverty—[3]
all things, in fact, come to us
not by chance[4]
but from his fatherly hand.[5]

[1] Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 17:24-28
[2] Heb. 1:3
[3] Jer. 5:24; Acts 14:15-17; John 9:3; Prov. 22:2
[4] Prov. 16:33
[5] Matt. 10:29

Q&A 28
**Q. How does the knowledge
of God's creation and providence
help us?**
A. We can be patient when things go against us,[1]
thankful when things go well,[2]
and for the future we can have
good confidence in our faithful God and Father
that nothing will separate us from his love.[3]
All creatures are so completely in his hand
that without his will
they can neither move nor be moved.[4]

[1] Job 1:21-22; James 1:3
[2] Deut. 8:10; 1 Thess. 5:18
[3] Ps. 55:22; Rom. 5:3-5; 8:38-39
[4] Job 1:12; 2:6; Prov. 21:1; Acts 17:24-28

Part II: Deliverance: God the Son
Lord's Day 11

Q&A 29
**Q. Why is the Son of God called "Jesus,"
meaning "savior"?**
A. Because he saves us from our sins.[1]
Salvation cannot be found in anyone else;
it is futile to look for any salvation elsewhere.[2]

[1] Matt. 1:21; Heb. 7:25
[2] Isa. 43:11; John 15:5; Acts 4:11-12; 1 Tim. 2:5

Q&A 30

Q. Do those who look for their salvation and security in saints, in themselves, or elsewhere really believe in the only savior Jesus?

A. No.
Although they boast of being his,
by their deeds they deny
the only savior and deliverer, Jesus.[1]

Either Jesus is not a perfect savior,
or those who in true faith accept this savior
have in him all they need for their salvation.[2]

[1] 1 Cor. 1:12-13; Gal. 5:4
[2] Col. 1:19-20; 2:10; 1 John 1:7

Lord's Day 12

Q&A 31

Q. Why is he called "Christ," meaning "anointed"?

A. Because he has been ordained by God the Father
and has been anointed with the Holy Spirit[1]
to be
our chief prophet and teacher[2]
who perfectly reveals to us
the secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance;[3]
our only high priest[4]
who has set us free by the one sacrifice of his body,[5]
and who continually pleads our cause with the Father;[6]
and our eternal king[7]
who governs us by his Word and Spirit,
and who guards us and keeps us
in the freedom he has won for us.[8]

[1] Luke 3:21-22; 4:14-19 (Isa. 61:1); Heb. 1:9 (Ps. 45:7)
[2] Acts 3:22 (Deut. 18:15)
[3] John 1:18; 15:15
[4] Heb. 7:17 (Ps. 110:4)
[5] Heb. 9:12; 10:11-14
[6] Rom. 8:34; Heb. 9:24
[7] Matt. 21:5 (Zech. 9:9)
[8] Matt. 28:18-20; John 10:28; Rev. 12:10-11

Q&A 32

Q. But why are you called a Christian?

A. Because by faith I am a member of Christ[1]
and so I share in his anointing.[2]
I am anointed
to confess his name,[3]
to present myself to him as a living sacrifice of thanks,[4]
to strive with a good conscience against sin and the devil
in this life,[5]
and afterward to reign with Christ
over all creation
for all eternity.[6]

[1] 1 Cor. 12:12-27
[2] Acts 2:17 (Joel 2:28); 1 John 2:27
[3] Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9-10; Heb. 13:15
[4] Rom. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9
[5] Gal. 5:16-17; Eph. 6:11; 1 Tim. 1:18-19
[6] Matt. 25:34; 2 Tim. 2:12

Lord's Day 13

Q&A 33

Q. Why is he called God's "only Son" when we also are God's children?

A. Because Christ alone is the eternal, natural Son of God.[1]
We, however, are adopted children of God—
adopted by grace through Christ.[2]

[1] John 1:1-3, 14, 18; Heb. 1
[2] John 1:12; Rom. 8:14-17; Eph. 1:5-6

Q&A 34

Q. Why do you call him "our Lord"?

A. Because—
not with gold or silver,
but with his precious blood—[1]
he has set us free
from sin and from the tyranny of the devil,[2]
and has bought us,
body and soul,
to be his very own.[3]

[1] 1 Pet. 1:18-19
[2] Col. 1:13-14; Heb. 2:14-15
[3] 1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Tim. 2:5-6

Lord's Day 14

Q&A 35

**Q. What does it mean that he
"was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary"?**

A. That the eternal Son of God,
who is and remains
true and eternal God,[1]
took to himself,
through the working of the Holy Spirit,[2]
from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary,[3]
a truly human nature
so that he might become David's true descendant,[4]
like his brothers in every way[5]
except for sin.[6]

[1] John 1:1; 10:30-36; Acts 13:33 (Ps. 2:7); Col. 1:15-17; 1 John 5:20
[2] Luke 1:35
[3] Matt. 1:18-23; John 1:14; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:14
[4] 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 132:11; Matt. 1:1; Rom. 1:3
[5] Phil. 2:7; Heb. 2:17
[6] Heb. 4:15; 7:26-27

Q&A 36

**Q. How does the holy conception and birth of Christ
benefit you?**

A. He is our mediator,[1]
and with his innocence and perfect holiness
he removes from God's sight
my sin—mine since I was conceived.[2]

[1] 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 9:13-15
[2] Rom. 8:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 4:4-5; 1 Pet. 1:18-19

Lord's Day 15

Q&A 37

**Q. What do you understand
by the word "suffered"?**

A. That during his whole life on earth,
but especially at the end,
Christ sustained
in body and soul
the anger of God against the sin of the whole human race.[1]

This he did in order that,
by his suffering as the only atoning sacrifice,[2]
he might set us free, body and soul,
from eternal condemnation,[3]
and gain for us
God's grace,
righteousness,
and eternal life.[4]

[1] Isa. 53; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18
[2] Rom. 3:25; Heb. 10:14; 1 John 2:2; 4:10
[3] Rom. 8:1-4; Gal. 3:13
[4] John 3:16; Rom. 3:24-26

Q&A 38

**Q. Why did he suffer
"under Pontius Pilate" as judge?**

A. So that he,
though innocent,
might be condemned by a civil judge,[1]
and so free us from the severe judgment of God
that was to fall on us.[2]

[1] Luke 23:13-24; John 19:4, 12-16
[2] Isa. 53:4-5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13

Q&A 39

**Q. Is it significant
that he was "crucified"
instead of dying some other way?**

A. Yes.
This death convinces me
that he shouldered the curse
which lay on me,
since death by crucifixion was accursed by God.[1]

[1] Gal. 3:10-13 (Deut. 21:23)

Lord's Day 16

Q&A 40

Q. Why did Christ have to go all the way to death?

A. Because God's justice and truth demand it:[1]
only the death of God's Son could pay for our sin.[2]

[1] Gen. 2:17
[2] Rom. 8:3-4; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 2:9

Q&A 41

Q. Why was he "buried"?

A. His burial testifies
that he really died.[1]

[1] Isa. 53:9; John 19:38-42; Acts 13:29; 1 Cor. 15:3-4

Q&A: 42
Q. Since Christ has died for us,
why do we still have to die?
A. Our death does not pay the debt of our sins.[1]
Rather, it puts an end to our sinning
and is our entrance into eternal life.[2]

[1] Ps. 49:7
[2] John 5:24; Phil. 1:21-23; 1 Thess. 5:9-10

Q&A 43
Q. What further advantage do we receive
from Christ's sacrifice and death on the cross?
A. Through Christ's death
our old selves are crucified, put to death, and buried with him,[1]
so that the evil desires of the flesh
may no longer rule us,[2]
but that instead we may dedicate ourselves
as an offering of gratitude to him.[3]

[1] Rom. 6:5-11; Col. 2:11-12
[2] Rom. 6:12-14
[3] Rom. 12:1; Eph. 5:1-2

Q&A 44
Q. Why does the creed add,
"He descended to hell"?
A. To assure me in times of personal crisis and temptation
that Christ my Lord,
by suffering unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul,
especially on the cross but also earlier,
has delivered me from the anguish and torment of hell.[1]

[1] Isa. 53; Matt. 26:36-46; 27:45-46; Luke 22:44; Heb. 5:7-10

Lord's Day 17

Q&A 45
Q. How does Christ's resurrection
benefit us?
A. First, by his resurrection he has overcome death,
so that he might make us share in the righteousness
he won for us by his death.[1]

Second, by his power we too
are already now resurrected to a new life.[2]

Third, Christ's resurrection
is a guarantee of our glorious resurrection.[3]

[1] Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:16-20; 1 Pet. 1:3-5
[2] Rom. 6:5-11; Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 3:1-4
[3] Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:12-23; Phil. 3:20-21

Lord's Day 18

Q&A 46
Q. What do you mean by saying,
"He ascended to heaven"?
A. That Christ,
while his disciples watched,
was lifted up from the earth to heaven[1]
and will be there for our good[2]
until he comes again
to judge the living and the dead.[3]

[1] Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11
[2] Rom. 8:34; Eph. 4:8-10; Heb. 7:23-25; 9:24
[3] Acts 1:11

Q&A 47
Q. But isn't Christ with us
until the end of the world
as he promised us?[1]
A. Christ is truly human and truly God.
In his human nature Christ is not now on earth;[2]
but in his divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit
he is not absent from us for a moment.[3]

[1] Matt. 28:20
[2] Acts 1:9-11; 3:19-21
[3] Matt. 28:18-20; John 14:16-19

Q&A 48
Q. If his humanity is not present
wherever his divinity is,
then aren't the two natures of Christ
separated from each other?
A. Certainly not.
Since divinity
is not limited
and is present everywhere,[1]
it is evident that
Christ's divinity is surely beyond the bounds of
the humanity he has taken on,
but at the same time his divinity is in

and remains personally united to
his humanity.[2]

[1] Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 7:48-49 (Isa. 66:1)
[2] John 1:14; 3:13; Col. 2:9

Q&A 49

Q. How does Christ's ascension to heaven benefit us?

A. First, he pleads our cause
in heaven
in the presence of his Father.[1]

Second, we have our own flesh in heaven—
a guarantee that Christ our head
will take us, his members,
to himself in heaven.[2]

Third, he sends his Spirit to us on earth
as a further guarantee.[3]
By the Spirit's power
we make the goal of our lives,
not earthly things,
but the things above where Christ is,
sitting at God's right hand.[4]

[1] Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1
[2] John 14:2; 17:24; Eph. 2:4-6
[3] John 14:16; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5
[4] Col. 3:1-4

Lord's Day 19

Q&A 50

Q. Why the next words: "and is seated at the right hand of God"?

A. Christ ascended to heaven,
there to show that he is head of his church,[1]
and that the Father rules all things through him.[2]

[1] Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:18
[2] Matt. 28:18; John 5:22-23

Q&A 51

Q. How does this glory of Christ our head benefit us?

A. First, through his Holy Spirit
he pours out his gifts from heaven
upon us his members.[1]

Second, by his power
he defends us and keeps us safe
from all enemies.[2]

[1] Acts 2:33; Eph. 4:7-12
[2] Ps. 110:1-2; John 10:27-30; Rev. 19:11-16

Q&A 52

Q. How does Christ's return "to judge the living and the dead" comfort you?

A. In all my distress and persecution
I turn my eyes to the heavens
and confidently await as judge the very One
who has already stood trial in my place before God
and so has removed the whole curse from me.[1]
All his enemies and mine
he will condemn to everlasting punishment:
but me and all his chosen ones
he will take along with him
into the joy and the glory of heaven.[2]

[1] Luke 21:28; Rom. 8:22-25; Phil. 3:20-21; Tit. 2:13-14
[2] Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Thess. 1:6-10

Part II: Deliverance: God the Holy Spirit

Lord's Day 20

Q&A 53

Q. What do you believe concerning "the Holy Spirit"?

A. First, he, as well as the Father and the Son,
is eternal God.[1]

Second, he has been given to me personally,[2]
so that, by true faith,
he makes me share in Christ and all his blessings,[3]
comforts me,[4]
and remains with me forever.[5]

[1] Gen. 1:1-2; Matt. 28:19; Acts 5:3-4
[2] 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Gal. 4:6
[3] Gal. 3:14
[4] John 15:26; Acts 9:31
[5] John 14:16-17; 1 Pet. 4:14

Lord's Day 21

Q&A 54

Q. What do you believe
concerning "the holy catholic church"?

A. I believe that the Son of God
through his Spirit and Word,[1]
out of the entire human race,[2]
from the beginning of the world to its end,[3]
gathers, protects, and preserves for himself
a community chosen for eternal life[4]
and united in true faith.[5]
And of this community I am[6] and always will be[7]
a living member.

[1] John 10:14-16; Acts 20:28; Rom. 10:14-17; Col. 1:18
[2] Gen. 26:3b-4; Rev. 5:9
[3] Isa. 59:21; 1 Cor. 11:26
[4] Matt. 16:18; John 10:28-30; Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:3-14
[5] Acts 2:42-47; Eph. 4:1-6
[6] 1 John 3:14, 19-21
[7] John 10:27-28; 1 Cor. 1:4-9; 1 Pet. 1:3-5

Q&A 55

Q. What do you understand by
"the communion of saints"?

A. First, that believers one and all,
as members of this community,
share in Christ
and in all his treasures and gifts.[1]

Second, that each member
should consider it a duty
to use these gifts
readily and cheerfully
for the service and enrichment
of the other members.[2]

[1] Rom. 8:32; 1 Cor. 6:17; 12:4-7, 12-13; 1 John 1:3
[2] Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:20-27; 13:1-7; Phil. 2:4-8

Q&A 56

Q. What do you believe
concerning "the forgiveness of sins"?

A. I believe that God,
because of Christ's atonement,
will never hold against me
any of my sins[1]
nor my sinful nature
which I need to struggle against all my life.[2]
Rather, in his grace
God grants me the righteousness of Christ
to free me forever from judgment.[3]

[1] Ps. 103:3-4, 10, 12; Mic. 7:18-19; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; 1 John 1:7; 2:2
[2] Rom. 7:21-25
[3] John 3:17-18; Rom. 8:1-2

Lord's Day 22

Q&A 57

Q. How does "the resurrection of the body"
comfort you?

A. Not only my soul
will be taken immediately after this life
to Christ its head,[1]
but even my very flesh, raised by the power of Christ,
will be reunited with my soul
and made like Christ's glorious* body.[2]

[1] Luke 23:43; Phil. 1:21-23
[2] 1 Cor. 15:20, 42-46, 54; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2

Q&A 58

Q. How does the article
concerning "life everlasting"
comfort you?

A. Even as I already now
experience in my heart
the beginning of eternal joy,[1]
so after this life I will have
perfect blessedness such as
no eye has seen,
no ear has heard,
no human heart has ever imagined:
a blessedness in which to praise God eternally.[2]

[1] Rom. 14:17
[2] John 17:3; 1 Cor. 2:9
*The first edition had here the German word for "holy." This was later corrected to the German word for "glorious."

Lord's Day 23

Q&A 59

Q. What good does it do you, however,
to believe all this?

A. In Christ I am right with God
and heir to life everlasting.[1]

[1] John 3:36; Rom. 1:17 (Hab. 2:4); Rom. 5:1-2

Q&A 60

Q. How are you right with God?

A. Only by true faith in Jesus Christ.[1]

Even though my conscience accuses me
of having grievously sinned against all God's commandments
and of never having kept any of them,[2]
and even though I am still inclined toward all evil,[3]
nevertheless,
without my deserving it at all,[4]
out of sheer grace,[5]
God grants and credits to me
the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ,[6]
as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner,
as if I had been as perfectly obedient
as Christ was obedient for me.[7]

All I need to do
is to accept this gift of God with a believing heart.[8]

[1] Rom. 3:21-28; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil 3:8-11
[2] Rom. 3:9-10
[3] Rom. 7:23
[4] Tit. 3:4-5
[5] Rom. 3:24; Eph. 2:8
[6] Rom. 4:3-5 (Gen. 15:6); 2 Cor. 5:17-19; 1 John 2:1-2
[7] Rom. 4:24-25; 2 Cor. 5:21
[8] John 3:18; Acts 16:30-31

Q&A 61

**Q. Why do you say that
by faith alone
you are right with God?**

A. It is not because of any value my faith has
that God is pleased with me.
Only Christ's satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness
make me right with God.[1]
And I can receive this righteousness and make it mine
in no other way than
by faith alone.[2]

[1] 1 Cor. 1:30-31
[2] Rom. 10:10; 1 John 5:10-12

Lord's Day 24

Q&A 62

**Q. Why can't the good we do
make us right with God,
or at least help make us right with him?**

A. Because the righteousness
which can pass God's scrutiny
must be entirely perfect
and must in every way measure up to the divine law.[1]
Even the very best we do in this life
is imperfect
and stained with sin.[2]

[1] Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:10 (Deut. 27:26)
[2] Isa. 64:6

Q&A 63

**Q. How can you say that the good we do
doesn't earn anything
when God promises to reward it
in this life and the next?[1]**

A. This reward is not earned;
it is a gift of grace.[2]

[1] Matt. 5:12; Heb. 11:6
[2] Luke 17:10; 2 Tim. 4:7-8

Q&A 64

**Q. But doesn't this teaching
make people indifferent and wicked?**

A. No.
It is impossible
for those grafted into Christ by true faith
not to produce fruits of gratitude.[1]

[1] Luke 6:43-45; John 15:5

Part II: The Sacraments
Lord's Day 25

Q&A 65
**Q. It is by faith alone
that we share in Christ and all his blessings:
where then does that faith come from?**
A. The Holy Spirit produces it in our hearts[1]
by the preaching of the holy gospel,[2]
and confirms it
through our use of the holy sacraments.[3]

[1] John 3:5; 1 Cor. 2:10-14; Eph. 2:8
[2] Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23-25
[3] Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 10:16

Q&A 66
Q. What are sacraments?
A. Sacraments are holy signs and seals for us to see.
They were instituted by God so that
by our use of them
he might make us understand more clearly
the promise of the gospel,
and might put his seal on that promise.[1]

And this is God's gospel promise:
to forgive our sins and give us eternal life
by grace alone
because of Christ's one sacrifice
finished on the cross.[2]

[1] Gen. 17:11; Deut. 30:6; Rom. 4:11
[2] Matt. 26:27-28; Acts 2:38; Heb. 10:10

Q&A 67
**Q. Are both the word and the sacraments then
intended to focus our faith
on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross
as the only ground of our salvation?**
A. Right!

In the gospel the Holy Spirit teaches us
and through the holy sacraments he assures us
that our entire salvation
rests on Christ's one sacrifice for us on the cross.[1]

[1] Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 3:27

Q&A 68
**Q. How many sacraments
did Christ institute in the New Testament?**
A. Two: baptism and the Lord's Supper.[1]

[1] Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26

Part II: The Sacraments: Baptism

Lord's Day 26
Baptism

Q&A 69
**Q. How does baptism
remind you and assure you
that Christ's one sacrifice on the cross
is for you personally?**
A. In this way:
Christ instituted this outward washing[1]
and with it gave the promise that,
as surely as water washes away the dirt from the body,
so certainly his blood and his Spirit
wash away my soul's impurity,
in other words, all my sins.[2]

[1] Acts 2:38
[2] Matt. 3:11; Rom. 6:3-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

Q&A 70
**Q. What does it mean
to be washed with Christ's blood and Spirit?**
A. To be washed with Christ's blood means
that God, by grace, has forgiven my sins
because of Christ's blood
poured out for me in his sacrifice on the cross.[1]

To be washed with Christ's Spirit means
that the Holy Spirit has renewed me
and set me apart to be a member of Christ
so that more and more I become dead to sin
and increasingly live a holy and blameless life.[2]

[1] Zech. 13:1; Eph. 1:7-8; Heb. 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rev. 1:5
[2] Ezek. 36:25-27; John 3:5-8; Rom. 6:4; 1 Cor. 6:11; Col. 2:11-12

Q&A 71

Q. Where does Christ promise that we are washed with his blood and Spirit as surely as we are washed with the water of baptism?

A. In the institution of baptism where he says:

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit."[1]

"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved,
but whoever does not believe will be condemned."[2]*

This promise is repeated when Scripture calls baptism
the washing of rebirth[3] and
the washing away of sins.[4]

[1] Matt. 28:19
[2] Mark 16:16
[3] Tit. 3:5
[4] Acts 22:16
*Earlier and better manuscripts of Mark 16 omit the words "Whoever believes and is baptized . . . condemned."

Lord's Day 27

Q&A 72

Q. Does this outward washing with water itself wash away sins?

A. No, only Jesus Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit
cleanse us from all sins.[1]

[1] Matt. 3:11; 1 Pet. 3:21; 1 John 1:7

Q&A 73

Q. Why then does the Holy Spirit call baptism the washing of rebirth and the washing away of sins?

A. God has good reason for these words.
He wants to teach us that
the blood and Spirit of Christ wash away our sins
just as water washes away dirt from our bodies.[1]

But more important,
he wants to assure us, by this divine pledge and sign,
that the washing away of our sins spiritually
is as real as physical washing with water.[2]

[1] 1 Cor. 6:11; Rev. 1:5; 7:14
[2] Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27

Q&A 74

Q. Should infants, too, be baptized?

A. Yes.
Infants as well as adults
are in God's covenant and are his people.[1]
They, no less than adults, are promised
the forgiveness of sin through Christ's blood
and the Holy Spirit who produces faith.[2]

Therefore, by baptism, the mark of the covenant,
infants should be received into the Christian church
and should be distinguished from the children
of unbelievers.[3]
This was done in the Old Testament by circumcision,[4]
which was replaced in the New Testament by baptism.[5]

[1] Gen. 17:7; Matt. 19:14
[2] Isa. 44:1-3; Acts 2:38-39; 16:31
[3] Acts 10:47; 1 Cor. 7:14
[4] Gen. 17:9-14
[5] Col. 2:11-13

Part II: The Sacraments: The Lord's Supper

Lord's Day 28

The Lord's Supper

Q&A 75

Q. How does the Lord's Supper remind you and assure you that you share in Christ's one sacrifice on the cross and in all his gifts?

A. In this way:
Christ has commanded me and all believers
to eat this broken bread and to drink this cup.
With this command he gave this promise:[1]

First,
as surely as I see with my eyes
the bread of the Lord broken for me
and the cup given to me,

so surely
his body was offered and broken for me
and his blood poured out for me
on the cross.

Second,
as surely as
I receive from the hand of the one who serves,
and taste with my mouth
the bread and cup of the Lord,
given me as sure signs of Christ's body and blood,
so surely
he nourishes and refreshes my soul for eternal life
with his crucified body and poured-out blood.

[1] Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25

Q&A 76
Q. What does it mean
to eat the crucified body of Christ
and to drink his poured-out blood?
A. It means
to accept with a believing heart
the entire suffering and death of Christ
and by believing
to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.[1]

But it means more.
Through the Holy Spirit, who lives both in Christ and in us,
we are united more and more to Christ's blessed body.[2]
And so, although he is in heaven[3] and we are on earth,
we are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone.[4]
And we forever live on and are governed by one Spirit,
as members of our body are by one soul.[5]

[1] John 6:35, 40, 50-54
[2] John 6:55-56; 1 Cor. 12:13
[3] Acts 1:9-11; 1 Cor. 11:26; Col. 3:1
[4] 1 Cor. 6:15-17; Eph. 5:29-30; 1 John 4:13
[5] John 6:56-58; 15:1-6; Eph. 4:15-16; 1 John 3:24

Q&A 77
Q. Where does Christ promise
to nourish and refresh believers
with his body and blood
as surely as
they eat this broken bread
and drink this cup?

A. In the institution of the Lord's Supper:

"The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed,
took bread, and when he had given thanks,
he broke it and said,
'This is my body, which is for you;
do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying,
'This cup is the new covenant in my blood;
do this, whenever you drink it,
in remembrance of me.'
For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death
until he comes."[1]

This promise is repeated by Paul in these words:

"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks
a participation in the blood of Christ?
And is not the bread that we break
a participation in the body of Christ?
Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body,
for we all partake of the one loaf."[2]

[1] 1 Cor. 11:23-26
[2] 1 Cor. 10:16-17

Lord's Day 29

Q&A 78
Q. Are the bread and wine changed into
the real body and blood of Christ?
A. No.
Just as the water of baptism
is not changed into Christ's blood
and does not itself wash away sins
but is simply God's sign and assurance,[1]
so too the bread of the Lord's Supper
is not changed into the actual body of Christ[2]
even though it is called the body of Christ[3]
in keeping with the nature and language of sacraments.[4]

[1] Eph. 5:26; Tit. 3:5
[2] Matt. 26:26-29
[3] 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:26-28
[4] Gen. 17:10-11; Ex. 12:11, 13; 1 Cor. 10:1-4

Q&A 79

**Q. Why then does Christ call
the bread his body
and the cup his blood,
or the new covenant in his blood?
(Paul uses the words,
a participation in Christ's body and blood.)**

A. Christ has good reason for these words.
He wants to teach us that
as bread and wine nourish our temporal life,
so too his crucified body and poured-out blood
truly nourish our souls for eternal life.[1]

But more important,
he wants to assure us, by this visible sign and pledge,
that we, through the Holy Spirit's work,
share in his true body and blood
as surely as our mouths
receive these holy signs in his remembrance,[2]
and that all of his suffering and obedience
are as definitely ours
as if we personally
had suffered and paid for our sins.[3]

[1] John 6:51, 55
[2] 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:26
[3] Rom. 6:5-11

Lord's Day 30

Q&A 80*

**Q. How does the Lord's Supper
differ from the Roman Catholic Mass?**

A. The Lord's Supper declares to us
that our sins have been completely forgiven
through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ
which he himself finished on the cross once for all.[1]
It also declares to us
that the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ,[2]
who with his very body
is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father[3]
where he wants us to worship him.[4]

[But the Mass teaches
that the living and the dead
do not have their sins forgiven
through the suffering of Christ
unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests.

It also teaches
that Christ is bodily present
in the form of bread and wine
where Christ is therefore to be worshiped.
Thus the Mass is basically
nothing but a denial
of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ
and a condemnable idolatry.]

[1] John 19:30; Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 25-26; 10:10-18
[2] 1 Cor. 6:17; 10:16-17
[3] Acts 7:55-56; Heb. 1:3; 8:1
[4] Matt. 6:20-21; John 4:21-24; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:1-3

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*Q&A 80 was altogether absent from the first German edition of the Heidelberg Catechism (January 1563) but appeared in a shorter form in the second German edition (March 1563). The translation above is of the expanded text of the third German edition (ca. April 1563). Its strong tone reflects the setting in which the Catechism was written.

In response to a mandate from Synod 1998, the Christian Reformed Church's Interchurch Relations Committee conducted a study of Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Mass. Based on this study, Synod 2004 declared that "Q. and A. 80 can no longer be held in its current form as part of our confession." Synod 2006 directed that Q. and A. 80 remain in the CRC's text of the Heidelberg Catechism but that the last three paragraphs be placed in brackets to indicate that they do not accurately reflect the official teaching and practice of today's Roman Catholic Church and are no longer confessionally binding on members of the CRC.

Q&A 81

**Q. Who are to come
to the Lord's table?**

A. Those who are displeased with themselves
because of their sins,
but who nevertheless trust
that their sins are pardoned
and that their continuing weakness is covered
by the suffering and death of Christ,
and who also desire more and more
to strengthen their faith
and to lead a better life.

Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however,
eat and drink judgment on themselves.[1]

[1] 1 Cor. 10:19-22; 11:26-32

Q&A 82

**Q. Are those to be admitted
to the Lord's Supper
who show by what they say and do
that they are unbelieving and ungodly?**

A. No, that would dishonor God's covenant
and bring down God's anger upon the entire congregation.[1]
Therefore, according to the instruction of Christ
and his apostles,
the Christian church is duty-bound to exclude such people,
by the official use of the keys of the kingdom,
until they reform their lives.

[1] 1 Cor. 11:17-32; Ps. 50:14-16; Isa. 1:11-17

Lord's Day 31

Q&A 83

Q. What are the keys of the kingdom?

A. The preaching of the holy gospel
and Christian discipline toward repentance.
Both preaching and discipline
open the kingdom of heaven to believers
and close it to unbelievers.[1]

[1] Matt. 16:19; John 20:22-23

Q&A 84

**Q. How does preaching the gospel
open and close the kingdom of heaven?**

A. According to the command of Christ:

The kingdom of heaven is opened
by proclaiming and publicly declaring
to all believers, each and every one, that,
as often as they accept the gospel promise in true faith,
God, because of what Christ has done,
truly forgives all their sins.

The kingdom of heaven is closed, however,
by proclaiming and publicly declaring
to unbelievers and hypocrites that,
as long as they do not repent,
the anger of God and eternal condemnation
rest on them.

God's judgment, both in this life and in the life to come,
is based on this gospel testimony.[1]

[1] Matt. 16:19; John 3:31-36; 20:21-23

Q&A 85

**Q. How is the kingdom of heaven
closed and opened by Christian discipline?**

A. According to the command of Christ:

Those who, though called Christians,
profess unchristian teachings or live unchristian lives,
and after repeated and loving counsel
refuse to abandon their errors and wickedness,
and after being reported to the church, that is, to its officers,
fail to respond also to their admonition—
such persons the officers exclude
from the Christian fellowship
by withholding the sacraments from them,
and God himself excludes them from the kingdom of Christ.[1]

Such persons,
when promising and demonstrating genuine reform,
are received again
as members of Christ
and of his church.[2]

[1] Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:3-5, 11-13; 2 Thess. 3:14-15
[2] Luke 15:20-24; 2 Cor. 2:6-11

Part III: Gratitude

Lord's Day 32

Q&A 86

**Q. We have been delivered
from our misery
by God's grace alone through Christ
and not because we have earned it:
why then must we still do good?**

A. To be sure, Christ has redeemed us by his blood.
But we do good because
Christ by his Spirit is also renewing us to be like himself,
so that in all our living
we may show that we are thankful to God
for all he has done for us,[1]
and so that he may be praised through us.[2]

And we do good
so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits,[3]
and so that by our godly living
our neighbors may be won over to Christ.[4]

[1] Rom. 6:13; 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:5-10
[2] Matt. 5:16; 1 Cor. 6:19-20
[3] Matt. 7:17-18; Gal. 5:22-24; 2 Pet. 1:10-11
[4] Matt. 5:14-16; Rom. 14:17-19; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:1-2

Q&A 87
Q. Can those be saved
who do not turn to God
from their ungrateful
and impenitent ways?
A. By no means.
Scripture tells us that
no unchaste person,
no idolater, adulterer, thief,
no covetous person,
no drunkard, slanderer, robber,
or the like
is going to inherit the kingdom of God.[1]

[1] 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:1-20; 1 John 3:14

Lord's Day 33

Q&A 88
Q. What is involved
in genuine repentance or conversion?
A. Two things:
the dying-away of the old self,
and the coming-to-life of the new.[1]

[1] Rom. 6:1-11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:5-10

Q&A 89
Q. What is the dying-away of the old self?
A. It is to be genuinely sorry for sin,
to hate it more and more,
and to run away from it.[1]

[1] Ps. 51:3-4, 17; Joel 2:12-13; Rom. 8:12-13; 2 Cor. 7:10

Q&A 90
Q. What is the coming-to-life of the new self?
A. It is wholehearted joy in God through Christ[1]
and a delight to do every kind of good
as God wants us to.[2]

[1] Ps. 51:8, 12; Isa.57:15; Rom. 5:1; 14:17
[2] Rom. 6:10-11; Gal. 2:20

Q&A 91
Q. What do we do that is good?
A. Only that which
arises out of true faith,[1]
conforms to God's law,[2]
and is done for his glory;[3]
and not that which is based
on what we think is right
or on established human tradition.[4]

[1] John 15:5; Heb. 11:6
[2] Lev. 18:4; 1 Sam. 15:22; Eph. 2:10
[3] 1 Cor. 10:31
[4] Deut. 12:32; Isa. 29:13; Ezek. 20:18-19; Matt. 15:7-9

Part III: Gratitude: The Ten Commandments
Lord's Day 34

Q&A 92
Q. What does the Lord say in his law?
A. God spoke all these words:

"The First Commandment"
I am the Lord your God,
who brought you out of Egypt,
out of the land of slavery.
You shall have no other gods before me.

"The Second Commandment"
You shall not make for yourself an idol
in the form of anything in heaven above
or on the earth beneath
or in the waters below.
You shall not bow down to them or worship them;
for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God,
punishing the children for the sin of the fathers
to the third and fourth generation
of those who hate me,
but showing love to a thousand generations of those
who love me and keep my commandments.

"The Third Commandment"
You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God,
for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless
who misuses his name.

"The Fourth Commandment"
Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
Six days you shall labor and do all your work,
but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.
On it you shall not do any work,
neither you, nor your son or daughter,
nor your manservant or maidservant,
nor your animals,
nor the alien within your gates.
For in six days the Lord made
the heavens and the earth, the sea,
and all that is in them,
but he rested on the seventh day.
Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day
and made it holy.

"The Fifth Commandment"
Honor your father and your mother,
so that you may live long
in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

"The Sixth Commandment"
You shall not murder.

"The Seventh Commandment"
You shall not commit adultery.

"The Eighth Commandment"
You shall not steal.

"The Ninth Commandment"
You shall not give false testimony
against your neighbor.

"The Tenth Commandment"
You shall not covet your neighbor's house.
You shall not covet your neighbor's wife,
or his manservant or maidservant,
his ox or donkey,
or anything that belongs to your neighbor.[1]

[1] Ex. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:6-21

Q&A 93
Q. How are these commandments divided?
A. Into two tables.
The first has four commandments,
teaching us what our relation to God should be.
The second has six commandments,
teaching us what we owe our neighbor.[1]

[1] Matt. 22:37-39

Q&A 94
Q. What does the Lord require in the first commandment?
A. That I, not wanting to endanger my very salvation,
avoid and shun
all idolatry,[1] magic, superstitious rites,[2]
and prayer to saints or to other creatures.[3]

That I sincerely acknowledge the only true God,[4]
trust him alone,[5]
look to him for every good thing[6]
humbly[7] and patiently,[8]
love him,[9] fear him,[10] and honor him[11]
with all my heart.

In short,
that I give up anything
rather than go against his will in any way.[12]

[1] 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 10:5-14; 1 John 5:21
[2] Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:9-12
[3] Matt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9
[4] John 17:3
[5] Jer. 17:5, 7
[6] Ps. 104:27-28; James 1:17
[7] 1 Pet. 5:5-6
[8] Col. 1:11; Heb. 10:36
[9] Matt. 22:37 (Deut. 6:5)
[10] Prov. 9:10; 1 Pet. 1:17
[11] Matt. 4:10 (Deut. 6:13)
[12] Matt. 5:29-30; 10:37-39

Q&A 95
Q. What is idolatry?
A. Idolatry is
having or inventing something in which one trusts
in place of or alongside of the only true God,
who has revealed himself in his Word.[1]

[1] 1 Chron. 16:26; Gal. 4:8-9; Eph. 5:5; Phil. 3:19

Lord's Day 35

Q&A 96

Q. What is God's will for us in the second commandment?

A. That we in no way make any image of God[1]
nor worship him in any other way
than he has commanded in his Word.[2]

[1] Deut. 4:15-19; Isa. 40:18-25; Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:22-23
[2] Lev. 10:1-7; 1 Sam. 15:22-23; John 4:23-24

Q&A 97

Q. May we then not make any image at all?

A. God can not and may not
be visibly portrayed in any way.

Although creatures may be portrayed,
yet God forbids making or having such images
if one's intention is to worship them
or to serve God through them.[1]

[1] Ex. 34:13-14, 17; 2 Kings 18:4-5

Q&A 98

Q. But may not images be permitted in the churches as teaching aids for the unlearned?

A. No, we shouldn't try to be wiser than God.
He wants his people instructed
by the living preaching of his Word—[1]
not by idols that cannot even talk.[2]

[1] Rom. 10:14-15, 17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:19
[2] Jer. 10:8; Hab. 2:18-20

Lord's Day 36

Q&A 99

Q. What is God's will for us in the third commandment?

A. That we neither blaspheme nor misuse the name of God
by cursing,[1] perjury,[2] or unnecessary oaths,[3]
nor share in such horrible sins
by being silent bystanders.[4]

In a word, it requires
that we use the holy name of God
only with reverence and awe,[5]
so that we may properly
confess him,[6]
pray to him,[7]
and praise him in everything we do and say.[8]

[1] Lev. 24:10-17
[2] Lev. 19:12
[3] Matt. 5:37; James 5:12
[4] Lev. 5:1; Prov. 29:24
[5] Ps. 99:1-5; Jer. 4:2
[6] Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10
[7] Ps. 50:14-15; 1 Tim. 2:8
[8] Col. 3:17

Q&A 100

Q. Is blasphemy of God's name by swearing and cursing really such serious sin that God is angry also with those who do not do all they can to help prevent it and forbid it?

A. Yes, indeed.[1]
No sin is greater,
no sin makes God more angry
than blaspheming his name.
That is why he commanded the death penalty for it.[2]

[1] Lev. 5:1
[2] Lev. 24:10-17

Lord's Day 37

Q&A 101

Q. But may we swear an oath in God's name if we do it reverently?

A. Yes, when the government demands it,
or when necessity requires it,
in order to maintain and promote truth and trustworthiness
for God's glory and our neighbor's good.

Such oaths are approved in God's Word[1]
and were rightly used by Old and New Testament believers.[2]

[1] Deut. 6:13; 10:20; Jer. 4:1-2; Heb. 6:16
[2] Gen. 21:24; Josh. 9:15; 1 Kings 1:29-30; Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:23

Q&A 102

Q. May we swear by saints or other creatures?

A. No.
A legitimate oath means calling upon God
as the one who knows my heart
to witness to my truthfulness
and to punish me if I swear falsely.[1]
No creature is worthy of such honor.[2]

[1] Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:23
[2] Matt. 5:34-37; 23:16-22; James 5:12

Lord's Day 38

Q&A 103

Q. What is God's will for you in the fourth commandment?

A. First,
that the gospel ministry and education for it be maintained,[1]
and that, especially on the festive day of rest,
I regularly attend the assembly of God's people[2]
to learn what God's Word teaches,[3]
to participate in the sacraments,[4]
to pray to God publicly,[5]
and to bring Christian offerings for the poor.[6]

Second,
that every day of my life
I rest from my evil ways,
let the Lord work in me through his Spirit,
and so begin already in this life
the eternal Sabbath.[7]

[1] Deut. 6:4-9, 20-25; 1 Cor. 9:13-14; 2 Tim. 2:2; 3:13-17; Tit. 1:5
[2] Deut. 12:5-12; Ps. 40:9-10; 68:26; Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:23-25
[3] Rom. 10:14-17; 1 Cor. 14:31-32; 1 Tim. 4:13
[4] 1 Cor. 11:23-25
[5] Col. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:1
[6] Ps. 50:14; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8 & 9
[7] Isa. 66:23; Heb. 4:9-11

Lord's Day 39

Q&A 104

Q. What is God's will for you in the fifth commandment?

A. That I honor, love, and be loyal to
my father and mother
and all those in authority over me;
that I obey and submit to them, as is proper,
when they correct and punish me;[1]
and also that I be patient with their failings—[2]
for through them God chooses to rule us.[3]

[1] Ex. 21:17; Prov. 1:8; 4:1; Rom. 13:1-2; Eph. 5:21-22; 6:1-9; Col. 3:18- 4:1
[2] Prov. 20:20; 23:22; 1 Pet. 2:18
[3] Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1-8; Eph. 6:1-9; Col. 3:18-21

Lord's Day 40

Q&A 105

Q. What is God's will for you in the sixth commandment?

A. I am not to belittle, insult, hate, or kill my neighbor—
not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture,
and certainly not by actual deeds—
and I am not to be party to this in others;[1]
rather, I am to put away all desire for revenge.[2]

I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself either.[3]

Prevention of murder is also why
government is armed with the sword.[4]

[1] Gen. 9:6; Lev. 19:17-18; Matt. 5:21-22; 26:52
[2] Prov. 25:21-22; Matt. 18:35; Rom. 12:19; Eph. 4:26
[3] Matt. 4:7; 26:52; Rom. 13:11-14
[4] Gen. 9:6; Ex. 21:14; Rom. 13:4

Q&A 106

Q. Does this commandment refer only to killing?

A. By forbidding murder God teaches us
that he hates the root of murder:
envy, hatred, anger, vindictiveness.[1]

In God's sight all such are murder.[2]

[1] Prov. 14:30; Rom. 1:29; 12:19; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 John 2:9-11
[2] 1 John 3:15

Q&A 107

Q. Is it enough then
that we do not kill our neighbor
in any such way?

A. No.
By condemning envy, hatred, and anger
God tells us
to love our neighbors as ourselves,[1]
to be patient, peace-loving, gentle,
merciful, and friendly to them,[2]
to protect them from harm as much as we can,
and to do good even to our enemies.[3]

[1] Matt. 7:12; 22:39; Rom. 12:10
[2] Matt. 5:3-12; Luke 6:36; Rom. 12:10, 18; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; 1 Pet. 3:8
[3] Ex. 23:4-5; Matt. 5:44-45; Rom. 12:20-21 (Prov. 25:21-22)

Lord's Day 41

Q&A 108

Q. What is God's will for us
in the seventh commandment?

A. God condemns all unchastity.[1]
We should therefore thoroughly detest it[2]
and, married or single,
live decent and chaste lives.[3]

[1] Lev. 18:30; Eph. 5:3-5
[2] Jude 22-23
[3] 1 Cor. 7:1-9; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; Heb. 13:4

Q&A 109

Q. Does God, in this commandment,
forbid only such scandalous sins as adultery?

A. We are temples of the Holy Spirit, body and soul,
and God wants both to be kept clean and holy.
That is why he forbids
everything which incites unchastity,[1]
whether it be actions, looks, talk, thoughts, or desires.[2]

[1] 1 Cor. 15:33; Eph. 5:18
[2] Matt. 5:27-29; 1 Cor. 6:18-20; Eph. 5:3-4

Lord's Day 42

Q&A 110

Q. What does God forbid
in the eighth commandment?

A. He forbids not only outright theft and robbery,
punishable by law.[1]

But in God's sight theft also includes
cheating and swindling our neighbor
by schemes made to appear legitimate,[2]
such as:
inaccurate measurements of weight, size, or volume;
fraudulent merchandising;
counterfeit money;
excessive interest;
or any other means forbidden by God.[3]

In addition he forbids all greed[4]
and pointless squandering of his gifts.[5]

[1] Ex. 22:1; 1 Cor. 5:9-10; 6:9-10
[2] Mic. 6:9-11; Luke 3:14; James 5:1-6
[3] Deut. 25:13-16; Ps. 15:5; Prov. 11:1; 12:22; Ezek. 45:9-12; Luke 6:35
[4] Luke 12:15; Eph. 5:5
[5] Prov. 21:20; 23:20-21; Luke 16:10-13

Q&A 111

Q. What does God require of you
in this commandment?

A. That I do whatever I can
for my neighbor's good,
that I treat others
as I would like them to treat me,
and that I work faithfully
so that I may share with those in need.[1]

[1] Isa. 58:5-10; Matt. 7:12; Gal. 6:9-10; Eph. 4:28

Lord's Day 43

Q&A 112

Q. What is God's will for you
in the ninth commandment?

A. God's will is that I
never give false testimony against anyone,
twist no one's words,
not gossip or slander,

nor join in condemning anyone
without a hearing or without a just cause.[1]

Rather, in court and everywhere else,
I should avoid lying and deceit of every kind;
these are devices the devil himself uses,
and they would call down on me God's intense anger.[2]
I should love the truth,
speak it candidly,
and openly acknowledge it.[3]
And I should do what I can
to guard and advance my neighbor's good name.[4]

[1] Ps. 15; Prov. 19:5; Matt. 7:1; Luke 6:37; Rom. 1:28-32
[2] Lev. 19:11-12; Prov. 12:22; 13:5; John 8:44; Rev. 21:8
[3] 1 Cor. 13:6; Eph. 4:25
[4] 1 Pet. 3:8-9; 4:8

Lord's Day 44

Q&A 113
Q. What is God's will for you in the tenth commandment?
A. That not even the slightest thought or desire
contrary to any one of God's commandments
should ever arise in my heart.

Rather, with all my heart
I should always hate sin
and take pleasure in whatever is right.[1]

[1] Ps. 19:7-14; 139:23-24; Rom. 7:7-8

Q&A 114
Q. But can those converted to God obey these commandments perfectly?
A. No.
In this life even the holiest
have only a small beginning of this obedience.[1]

Nevertheless, with all seriousness of purpose,
they do begin to live
according to all, not only some,
of God's commandments.[2]

[1] Eccles. 7:20; Rom. 7:14-15; 1 Cor. 13:9; 1 John 1:8-10
[2] Ps. 1:1-2; Rom. 7:22-25; Phil. 3:12-16

Q&A 115
Q. No one in this life can obey the Ten Commandments perfectly: why then does God want them preached so pointedly?
A. First, so that the longer we live
the more we may come to know our sinfulness
and the more eagerly look to Christ
for forgiveness of sins and righteousness.[1]

Second, so that,
while praying to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit,
we may never stop striving
to be renewed more and more after God's image,
until after this life we reach our goal:
perfection.[2]

[1] Ps. 32:5; Rom. 3:19-26; 7:7, 24-25; 1 John 1:9
[2] 1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:12-14; 1 John 3:1-3

Part III: Gratitude: The Lord's Prayer
Lord's Day 45

Q&A 116
Q. Why do Christians need to pray?
A. Because prayer is the most important part
of the thankfulness God requires of us.[1]
And also because God gives his grace and Holy Spirit
only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly,
asking God for these gifts
and thanking him for them.[2]

[1] Ps. 50:14-15; 116:12-19; 1 Thess. 5:16-18
[2] Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 11:9-13

Q&A 117
Q. How does God want us to pray so that he will listen to us?
A. First, we must pray from the heart
to no other than the one true God,
who has revealed himself in his Word,
asking for everything he has commanded us to ask for.[1]

Second, we must acknowledge our need and misery,
hiding nothing,
and humble ourselves in his majestic presence.[2]

Third, we must rest on this unshakable foundation:
even though we do not deserve it,
God will surely listen to our prayer
because of Christ our Lord.
That is what he promised us in his Word.[3]

[1] Ps. 145:18-20; John 4:22-24; Rom. 8:26-27; James 1:5; 1 John 5:14-15
[2] 2 Chron. 7:14; Ps. 2:11; 34:18; 62:8; Isa. 66:2; Rev. 4
[3] Dan. 9:17-19; Matt. 7:8; John 14:13-14; 16:23; Rom. 10:13; James 1:6

Q&A 118

Q. What did God command us to pray for?

A. Everything we need, spiritually and physically,[1]
as embraced in the prayer
Christ our Lord himself taught us.

[1] James 1:17; Matt. 6:33

Q&A 119

Q. What is this prayer?

A. Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.
For yours is the kingdom
and the power
and the glory forever.
Amen.[1*]

[1] Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4
*Earlier and better manuscripts of Matthew 6 omit the words "For yours is the kingdom . . . Amen."

Lord's Day 46

Q&A 120

Q. Why did Christ command us to call God "our Father"?

A. At the very beginning of our prayer
Christ wants to kindle in us
what is basic to our prayer—
the childlike awe and trust
that God through Christ has become
our Father.

Our fathers do not refuse us
the things of this life;
God our Father will even less refuse to give us
what we ask in faith.[1]

[1] Matt. 7:9-11; Luke 11:11-13

Q&A 121

Q. Why the words "in heaven"?

A. These words teach us
not to think of God's heavenly majesty
as something earthly,[1]
and to expect everything
for body and soul
from his almighty power.[2]

[1] Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 17:24-25
[2] Matt. 6:25-34; Rom. 8:31-32

Lord's Day 47

Q&A 122

Q. What does the first request mean?

A. "Hallowed be your name" means,

Help us to really know you,[1]
to bless, worship, and praise you
for all your works
and for all that shines forth from them:
your almighty power, wisdom, kindness,
justice, mercy, and truth.[2]

And it means,

Help us to direct all our living—
what we think, say, and do—
so that your name will never be blasphemed because of us
but always honored and praised.[3]

[1] Jer. 9:23-24; 31:33-34; Matt. 16:17; John 17:3
[2] Ex. 34:5-8; Ps. 145; Jer. 32:16-20; Luke 1:46-55, 68-75; Rom. 11:33-36
[3] Ps. 115:1; Matt. 5:16

Lord's Day 48

Q&A 123
Q. What does the second request mean?
A. "Your kingdom come" means,
Rule us by your Word and Spirit in such a way
that more and more we submit to you.[1]

Keep your church strong, and add to it.[2]

Destroy the devil's work;
destroy every force which revolts against you
and every conspiracy against your Word.[3]

Do this until your kingdom is so complete and perfect
that in it you are
all in all.[4]

[1] Ps. 119:5, 105; 143:10; Matt. 6:33
[2] Ps. 122:6-9; Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:42-47
[3] Rom. 16:20; 1 John 3:8
[4] Rom. 8:22-23; 1 Cor. 15:28; Rev. 22:17, 20

Lord's Day 49

Q&A 124
Q. What does the third request mean?
A. "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" means,

Help us and all people
to reject our own wills
and to obey your will without any back talk.
Your will alone is good.[1]

Help us one and all to carry out the work we are called to,[2]
as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven.[3]

[1] Matt. 7:21; 16:24-26; Luke 22:42; Rom. 12:1-2; Tit. 2:11-12
[2] 1 Cor. 7:17-24; Eph. 6:5-9
[3] Ps. 103:20-21

Lord's Day 50

Q&A 125
Q. What does the fourth request mean?
A. "Give us today our daily bread" means,

Do take care of all our physical needs[1]
so that we come to know
that you are the only source of everything good,[2]
and that neither our work and worry
nor your gifts
can do us any good without your blessing.[3]

And so help us to give up our trust in creatures
and to put trust in you alone.[4]

[1] Ps. 104:27-30; 145:15-16; Matt. 6:25-34
[2] Acts 14:17; 17:25; James 1:17
[3] Deut. 8:3; Ps. 37:16; 127:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:58
[4] Ps. 55:22; 62; 146; Jer. 17:5-8; Heb. 13:5-6

Lord's Day 51

Q&A 126
Q. What does the fifth request mean?
A. "Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors" means,

Because of Christ's blood,
do not hold against us, poor sinners that we are,
any of the sins we do
or the evil that constantly clings to us.[1]

Forgive us just as we are fully determined,
as evidence of your grace in us,
to forgive our neighbors.[2]

[1] Ps. 51:1-7; 143:2; Rom. 8:1; 1 John 2:1-2
[2] Matt. 6:14-15; 18:21-35

Lord's Day 52

Q&A 127
Q. What does the sixth request mean?
A. "And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one" means,

By ourselves we are too weak
to hold our own even for a moment.[1]

And our sworn enemies—
the devil,[2] the world,[3] and our own flesh—[4]
never stop attacking us.

And so, Lord,
uphold us and make us strong
with the strength of your Holy Spirit,
so that we may not go down to defeat
in this spiritual struggle,[5]
but may firmly resist our enemies
until we finally win the complete victory.[6]

[1] Ps. 103:14-16; John 15:1-5
[2] 2 Cor. 11:14; Eph. 6:10-13; 1 Pet. 5:8
[3] John 15:18-21
[4] Rom. 7:23; Gal. 5:17
[5] Matt. 10:19-20; 26:41; Mark 13:33; Rom. 5:3-5
[6] 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23

Q&A 128
Q. What does your conclusion to this prayer mean?
A. "For yours is the kingdom
and the power
and the glory forever" means,

We have made all these requests of you
because, as our all-powerful king,
you not only want to,
but are able to give us all that is good;[1]
and because your holy name,
and not we ourselves,
should receive all the praise, forever.[2]

[1] Rom. 10:11-13; 2 Pet. 2:9
[2] Ps. 115:1; John 14:13

Q&A 129
Q. What does that little word "Amen" express?
A. "Amen" means,

This is sure to be!

It is even more sure
that God listens to my prayer,
than that I really desire
what I pray for.[1]

[1] Isa. 65:24; 2 Cor. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:13